The Objective and Goal of Muhammad's Prophethood (SAW)

In the light of the Holy Qur'an

Dr. Israr Ahmad

(Translated into English by Dr. Absar Ahmad)

Shoba Samo Basr

Markazi Anjuman Khuddam-ul-Qur'an

Translator's Note

The present booklet consists of the English translation of a highly significant paper, entitled *The* Objective *and Goal of Muhammad's Prophethood (SAW), in the light of the Holy Qur'an .* This was originally presented by Dr. Israr Ahmad, *Ameer* of Tanzeem-e-Islami and the Founder-President of the Markazi Anjuman Khuddam-ul-Qur'an Lahore, in the fifth session of the second annual "Qur'an Conference" held on March 26, 1975, at Jinnah Hall, Lahore. It was later published in two issues of the monthly Meesaq, and then, along with another related paper, as an Urdu booklet. The present English translation has already appeared in the quarterly journal *The Qur'anic Horizons*, and now it is being presented in the form of a booklet.

The significance of this treatise lies in the fact that it delineates, in a clear, cogent, and lucid manner, the Divinely ordained target or aim of the strenuous struggle carried out by Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and his devoted Companions. It is of utmost importance for all those groups and movements which are endeavoring for the revival and domination of Islam to realize the importance of this struggle in the overall system of Islamic thought, as well as the theoretical relationship of this struggle with the fundamental Islamic beliefs in the unity of God, the Prophethood, and the Hereafter.

At the same time, this paper also demonstrates the relevance of the dynamic concept of Islam, as compared to the narrow and static outlook which has come to dominate the Islamic world during the last few centuries. Moreover, various theosophical issues relating to the dynamics of *qulb*, *nafs*, and *ruh* have also been dealt with in the light of the Qur'anic teachings.

Dr. Absar Ahmad
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In the name of Allah, the Beneficient, the Merciful

We Muslims believe that the best of all human beings — Muhammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him — was much more than just one of the many prophets, as he was Khatam al-nabiyyeen (seal of the prophets); simultaneously, we also believe that he was much more than just one of the numerous messengers of Allah, as he was *Aakhir al-Rusul* (the final Messenger). Prophecy or Prophethood not only ends and comes to a close with the advent of Muhammad (SAW), but it also achieves its final plenitude, consummation and culmination in him. This means that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) represents the completion and climax of all earlier prophetic missions, as well as the fulfillment and full blossoming of all antecedent Divine revelations. Seen in this perspective, it becomes absolutely certain that whereas the objective and aim of Muhammad's prophethood cannot be fundamentally different from those of all other prophets, at the same time it must also reflect the characteristic of completion and full realization. And this by itself confers on him a distinct and special place in the galaxy of noble prophets.

It is, therefore, clear that in order to fully comprehend and appreciate the objective of Muhammad's advent as the final prophet we must first understand, as enunciated by the Holy Qur'an, the general objective of the institution of Prophethood itself. Only then can we attempt to grasp the distinctive and unique nature of the goal of Muhammad's Prophethood, as well as its significance. May Allah's peace and blessings be upon him.

THE AXIAL PURPOSE OF PROPHETS

Three Doctrinal Beliefs

It is common knowledge that Islam is based upon three metaphysical beliefs, viz., the faith in Allah as the one Supreme Creator and Sovereign (Tawheed), the belief in the accountability in the life-after-death (Ma'ad), and the faith in the institutions of Prophethood and Revelation *(Risalah).* However, what is generally not realized is the fact that these three doctrinal beliefs are very deeply connected and logically related, and, taken together, constitute an indivisible organic unity. Let us try to examine very briefly and schematically the real import of these beliefs and the nature of their mutual relationship.

Belief in Allah

Keeping aside philosophical controversies and theological intricacies, the quintessential claim of belief in Allah is as follows. The entire realm of being and the whole cosmic complex is neither eternal nor ever-lasting; rather, it is both contingent and perishable. In itself, it has no warrant for its own existence and it cannot explain itself. However, there is one such Being as has neither beginning in time nor an end — Allah, the proper name for God. It makes no difference whether one calls Him Allah or Al-Rahman (The Most Beneficent). He is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe and of man, and, particularly, the giver of guidance for man and the Supreme Judge of his conduct. God's existence can be brought home to those who care to

reflect, so that it not only ceases to be an 'irrational' or 'unreasonable' belief but also becomes for them the Master-Truth. He is all-enveloping, literally boundless, and He alone is absolute, eternal, and infinite. Everything else carries in the very texture of its being the hallmark of its finitude and creatureliness. He is the personification of all good attributes, like Power, Majesty, Mercy, Munificence, Knowledge, etc., in the utmost degree. In the very nature of the case, there can be only one God, for whenever one tries to conceive of more than one, only one will be found to emerge as the First. The Holy Qur'an declares:

> Do not take two gods (for) He is only One. (Al-Nahl 16:51)
>
> God bears witness that there is no god but He. (Aal-i-Imran 3:18)
>
> Say (O Muhammad) if there were other gods beside Him, as these people assert, they would all (necessarily) seek their way to the (one) Lord of the Throne. (Al-Isra 17:42)

Nobody from amongst the creatures shares His substantial essence, attributes, rights, authority and privileges. God cannot be regarded as an existent among other existents. In the metaphysical realm, there can be no democratic and equal sharing of being between the Original, the Creator, the Self-Sufficient and Necessary on the one hand and the borrowed, the created, the contingent on the 0other. The Qur'anic condemnation of Shirk (assigning partners to God) has its roots firmly in the metaphysical realm and then issues forth its corollaries in the political and moral fields.

The whole Sura al-Ikhlas, like many other verses of the Holy Qur'an, most categorically emphasizes the oneness and absoluteness of God Almighty:

> Say:He is one God: God the eternal, the Uncaused (Absolute) Cause of all being. He begets not, and neither is He begotten; and there is nothing that could be compared with Him. (Al-Ikhlas 112:1-4)
>
> And say: All praise is to God, who begets no offspring, and has no partner in his dominion, and has no weakness, and therefore no need of any aid,and (thus) extol His limitless greatness. (Al-Isra 17:111)
>
> He allots to no one a share in His dominion and rule. (Al-Kahf 18:26)

Almighty Allah (SWT) has created the universe with a purpose and for a definite period of time. The creation of the universe is a serious affair, not a sport or triviality:

> And We have not created the heavens and the earth and what is therein purposelessly — that is the opinion of those who reject (God) or are ungrateful. (Al-Saad 38:27)

The non-ultimacy of nature itself proves its destructibility and the Qur'an tells us that God in His wisdom has created the myriad forms of existence for a finite duration of time, known only to Him. At the pinnacle of God's multi-layered creations appears man whom He endowed with a dual nature: Allah (SWT) created his animal form and then breathed into him out of His own Spirit, and made him His vicegerent on earth. In other words, the Holy Qur'an presents a theomorphic conception of man: he is *homo cum Deo*. The creation of man represents

the acme of Divine creative process, as, according to an authentic tradition of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), God has created man in His own image. The following verses of the Holy Qur'an refers to both aspects of the creation of man:

> We have indeed created man in the finest of moulds, then We reversed him to the lowest of the low. (Al-Teen 95: 4,5)

Belief in the Life Hereafter

The core of this Islamic belief lies in the assertion that the present terrestrial existence of man does not constitute his total life; rather, it is a short preamble of the everlasting life in the Hereafter, a very brief preface of the long life-book. Life in this world is merely a trial or examination period, the rewards or punishments of which will be enjoyed or suffered in the Hereafter (*Al-Aakhira*). Physical death experienced by man in this world does not represent the annihilation of the individual person; rather it is only his transportation from this world to the eternal life in the next world. Immediately after death is the *Barzakh*, a brief halting station on the way to the Hereafter, and the ever-lasting life will begin after the Day of Judgement (the final accounting of deeds). Resurrection of the dead, final reckoning, weighing of deed-records, torments of the hell-fire and joys of the Paradise — all are essential parts of the Qur'anic eschatology which fully elaborate the Islamic belief in the Hereafter. *Al-Aakhira* or the 'end' is the moment of truth. Thus "that day man will recall what he had been striving for" (Al-Naaziat 79:35) is a typical statement of this phenomenon. It is an Hour when all veils between the subjective perceptions of man and the objective moral reality will be rent:

> You were in deep heedlessness about this (Hour of self-awareness), but now We have rent your veil, so your sight today is keen. (Qaaf 50:22)

Indeed, the essence of the Hereafter (*Al-Aakhira*) consists in the long-range results or consequences of man's endeavours during his earthly life. *Ad-Dunya*, or the immediate objectives and the here-and-now of life, on the contrary, represents the lower values, the baser pursuits which appear so tempting that most men run after them most of the time, at the expense of the higher and long-range ends. The Holy Prophet (SAW) has elaborated this in one of his moving sermons thus:

> I swear by Allah that all of you will certainly die, just as you go to sleep at night. Then surely you will all be raised again as you wake up in the morning.Then you will definitely be judged for the deeds you had been doing. You will get rewards for good deeds and punishment for the evil ones; it will either be the everlasting life of Paradise or the endless torment of Hell-fire. (Cf. Sermons of the Holy Prophet, reproduced in *Nahjul Balagha*)

The Relationship between the *Belief in Allah* and the *Belief in the Hereafter*

With a little thoughtful reflection one can realize that the Islamic metaphysical belief in the Divine Creator and the eschatological belief in the Hereafter together constitute the total sapiential knowledge of the whence (*mabda*) and whither (*ma'ad*) of man. That is to say, one who upholds these beliefs reflectively and with full consciousness, *ipso facto*, possesses authentic

knowledge both about his source or origin and his ultimate destiny or destination. The Holy Qur'an summarizes this in the following words:

> Verily, we are from Allah and unto Him we shall return. (Al-Baqara 2:156)

As a matter of truth, a man without this absolutely essential knowledge of the *whence* and *whither* of humanity is like a wayfarer who, due to a mishap during the course of his journey, neither remembers as to wherefrom he started his excursion nor recalls the destination to which he was traveling. One can well imagine the miserable plight and mental anguish of that traveler. This is exactly the situation of a man who, not knowing his ultimate destination or the purpose of his existence, spends his entire life in pursuing this-worldly goals, in accumulating the means of material sustenance and luxuries, and in seeking carnal gratifications. Such a man is so absorbed in his immediate physical concerns and his narrow material gains that he does not heed the higher ideals and values of life. The Holy Qur'an allegorically speaks of this man thus:

> But then, is he who goes along prone on his face better guided than he who walks upright on a straight path? (Al-Mulk 67:22)

That is to say, the man who is ignorant of Divine guidance is confined in a narrow single dimension. He therefore sees only what is immediately beneath his feet, and is utterly unaware of the direction his path is taking him to. This is a metaphor of the spiritual obtuseness which prevents a person from caring for anything beyond his proximate worldly concerns.

Or else, this man is like a kite which, its thin cord having been cut, is entirely at the mercy of the ever-changing winds. The winds may carry it wherever they like. The Holy Qur'an expresses this very graphically in these words:

> For he who ascribes divine qualities to anything beside God is like one who is hurtling down from the sky, whereupon either the birds snatch him off, or the winds blow him away to a far off place (Al-Hajj 22:31)

The net result of this rejection or ignorance of the Divine guidance in respect of the whence and whither of man is that he becomes enmeshed in metaphysical doubts and uncertainties, ending up with wholesale agnosticism or skepticism. The logical end-point of this epistemological confusion is that some thinkers are led even to the extent of casting doubts on their own objective existence and into total ethical nihilism.

An Important Question

At this juncture a very crucial question arises, the right answer to which can explain the logical relation between the Islamic metaphysical beliefs discussed above — that is, belief in Allah and in the Hereafter — and the doctrine of Prophethood. The question is: on what basis is man to be judged in the Hereafter? Or, in other words, on what grounds is man accountable for his deeds on the Day of Judgement?

The most authentic explanation of this issue, in the light of the Holy Qur'an, can be very succinctly expressed thus:

Primarily (and essentially), a man is accountable for his deeds on the grounds of natural capacities and higher faculties which are bestowed on him by Allah (SWT), viz., the abilities of sight and hearing and reasoning, the faculties of perception and intuition and insight, and a powerful penchant and love for the Creator — that is to say, the three faculties of *nafs* (self), *qalb* (heart), and *ruh* (spirit or soul).

Secondarily, Almighty Allah (SWT) has, in His infinite Mercy, supplemented the above mentioned inherent potentialities of man with heavenly guidance through revelation of Books and sending of His Prophets and Messengers, so that men might have no excuse before God on the Day of Judgement, so that they may not be in a position to plead ignorance. Revelation and Prophethood is thus an additional (and external, so to say) factor that makes man fully answerable to God for his deeds in the Hereafter. This point, however, calls for a little clarification:

Latifa-e-Nafs

Self or ego is the lowest of all the faculties possessed by man. Considered from this standpoint, man no doubt is only a highly evolved animal and belongs to the realm of Creation *(Aalam-e-Khalq).* A major part of this self is carnal, and its dominant inclination is towards inferior and baser pursuits. The Holy Qur'an calls this self *'nafs-e-ammarah'*, i.e., the self which prompts man to worldly and immoral aims. This is an expression for the lowest stage in the spiritual growth of man, the stage where low desires and animal passions rule his personality and he succumbs to them like any other brute. Different aspects of this self were studied and pointed out by Marx, Freud, and Adler. Each of them focused his attention exclusively on one of the urges and desires belonging to the lower human self. Darwin, too, was not entirely wrong in asserting the human biological evolution which is a fact in respect of the natural development of the earthly or animal part of man.

Latifa-e-Ruh

Diametrically opposed to the above mentioned animal self is that component of man which is his soul or spirit. It is a Divine element in man, as Almighty Allah (SWT) has associated it with Himself: "and breathed into him of My Spirit" (*Al-Hijr 15:29 & Al-Saad 38:72*). This spiritual element of man totally belongs to *Aalam-e-Amr,* or the realm of Divine directive force:"Say, the spirit is from God's direction" (Al-Asra 17:85). Being strictly of Divine origin, it has an inherent love for, and attraction towards, Almighty Allah (SWT), and, consequently, aspires for a communion with Him. In spiritually mature personalities, however, this dormant tendency becomes very acute and lights up in the form of what is described as a *Divine spark*.

The Internal Strife of Good and Evil

Being a composite of baser animal ego (*nafs*) and the Divine spiritual soul *(ruh),* man can rightly be characterized as a "microcosm" of the whole being — possessing in, and reflecting from, the innermost recesses of his selfhood both evil tendencies and higher spiritual aspirations. He experiences within himself the lowest drives of evil and vice, as well as the

noblest urgings for moral righteousness and spiritual excellence. Man's inner personality thus is an arena of a long and perpetual pitched battle between the forces of evil and goodness.

The Basic Grounds for Accountability

Almighty Allah (SWT) has not sent man in this world without giving him any capacity and potential to cope with the inner strife of good and evil. On the contrary, man has been endowed with numerous faculties that help him in fighting out the blind and irrational promptings of evil. Even the lowest element of his personality — the animal self or *Latifa-e-Nafs* — is equipped not only with the capacities of sight, hearing, and reasoning, but also with an acute moral sense. There is a world of qualitative difference between the sensory and mental operations of human beings and brute animals. Logical reasoning through induction and deduction, abstractions and thoughtful reflections, as well as metaphysical speculations are only the prerogatives of human beings. Moreover, the human self has been equipped by Allah (SWT) with a moral sense that discriminates between virtue and vice, between moral rectitude and immorality. That is why man's own inner moral self, or *nafs-i-lawwamah* in Qur'anic terminology, is the most authentic judge within. Slightest departure from the path of moral rectitude activates this "self-accusing soul" and the pricks of conscience are immediately experienced by the evil-doer. The following verses of the Holy Qur'an categorically state these truths:

> Indeed, We created man from a mixed sperm-drop in order to try him, and therefore We made him capable of hearing and seeing. (Al-Dahr 76:2)

> Nay, I call to witness the Day of Resurrection! But nay, I call to witness the accusing voice of man's own conscience (Al-Qiyamah 75:1,2)

> And (by the) human self, and how it is formed in accordance with what it is meant to be; then inspired it with its moral failings as well as with its God-consciousness. (Al-Shams 91:7,8)

The connotation of the verb *sawwa,* used in the Arabic text of the last quotation above, is that Almighty Allah (SWT) has endowed the human self with an inner coherence and with qualities consistent with the functions which it is meant to perform, and thus has adapted it *a priori* to the exigencies of its terrestrial existence. Moreover, Allah (SWT) has implanted a keen moral sense in him; thus, the fact that man is equally liable to rise to great spiritual heights as well as to fall into utter immorality is an essential and primordial characteristic of human nature as such. In other words, it is this inherent dichotomy of tendencies which gives to every right choice a value, and, thus, endows man with moral free-will.

The Holy Qur'an speaks of three types of human self, or three stages or states of the spiritual development: *Nafs-e-ammara* (Yousuf 12:53) is prone to evil, and, if unchecked and uncontrolled, leads to perdition and eternal damnation; *nafs-e-lawwama* (Al-Qiyamah 75:2) which feels conscious of the evil and resists, asks for God's grace and pardon after repentance and tries to amend; *nafs-e-mutma'inna* (Al-Fajr 89:27), the highest stage of all, when it achieves full peace and satisfaction in obeying Divine commands. According to the Qur'an, a man is

always cognizant, because of his inborn moral sense, of the morality or immorality of his actions, irrespective of the rationalizations or excuses that he may offer. Thus, the Qur'an says:

> Nay, but man is a witness against himself, even though he may veil himself in excuses. (Al-Qiyamah 75:14,15)

On the Day of Judgement, one's tongue, hands, feet, and skin will bear witness against him as to his actions. It is not what a man will say about himself, or what others say of him, that determines the judgement upon him. It is what he is in himself. His own inner personality will betray him and condemn him.

The above cited Qur'anic verses and the brief explanatory notes make the truth crystal clear that man is not, like animals, merely a sentient or instinctive being; rather, he has been made by the Creator into a full-fledged human person — a human being capable of discerning between right and wrong and thus of choosing his way of life. On the basis of this ingrained moral sense, every human being as such is answerable on the Day of Final Reckoning, and is fully liable to punishment or reward. Every individual will have to account for his own deeds personally, and face the trial and the judgement himself. The Holy Qur'an make clear this point thus:

> (Be conscious, then, of) the Day every human being shall come to plead for himself (alone), and every human being shall be repaid in full for whatever he has done, and none shall be wronged. (Al-Nahl 16:111)

The Holy Qur'an categorically refutes the Christian doctrine of vicarious redemption as well as the Jewish idea that "the chosen people" — as the Jews consider themselves — would be exempt from punishment on the Day of Judgement. On that day, nobody would be able to help another, nor will there be any possibility of ransom or intercession, as the Qur'an says:

> And remain conscious of (the coming of) a Day when no human being shall in the least avail another, nor shall intercession be accepted from any of them, nor ransom taken from them, and none shall be succoured (Al-Baqara 2:48)

Latifa-e-Qalb

In addition to the above mentioned faculties of sight, hearing, reasoning, and moral acumen, Almighty Allah (SWT) has also endowed man with the heart *(qalb),* i.e., the faculty of contemplative intuition and the seat or organ of numinous apprehension. The heart is indeed ablaze with the light of love and gnosis of Almighty Allah (SWT). It reflects within itself all the transcendental truths and the reality of all true existence.

The heart is, so to say, a microcosmic reality which contains within itself the reflection of the entire supersensible Macrocosm. Whereas *latifa-e-nafs* has been bestowed with the faculties of receiving and interpreting sense data — which is the foundation of all physical and theoretical sciences — *latifa-e-qalb* has been given the power of direct perception of spiritual verities. Heart, in Qur'anic epistemology, is the seat of the true self or the repository of soul, of which we may be conscious or ignorant, but which is our true existential and intellectual — and

therefore universal — center. Knowledge afforded by the heart is qualitatively different from that which is acquired at the level of *latifa-i-nafs* through external senses and ordinary channels of ratiocination. The heart is, as it were, immersed in the immutability of Being and is, thus, an organ of ilm-i-ladunni, which is knowledge imparted directly by God through intuition and inner perception. It is a supersensory organ of cognition in which the knowledge of esoteric truths transpires through *tafaqquh*, i.e., meditative reflection, where contemplativity is stressed more than the sharpness of intelligence.

By bestowing upon man the subtle and luminous cognitive faculty of heart, Almighty Allah (SWT) has conclusively rendered him responsible and accountable for his deeds in the Life-after-death.

Muslim poets in general and the mystic poets of the Indo-Persia in particular have, in their lyrical compositions, lauded the role of the heart in attaining veridical knowledge. They have done so quite rightly, and with hardly any fanciful exaggeration, since the paramount importance of the heart was emphatically pointed out by the Holy Prophet himself (SAW). For instance, according to one of his oft-quoted sayings, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said, "Verily, just like pieces of iron which get rusty if water touches them, hearts also become rusty." Thereupon his Companions asked, "We do polish rusty objects, but how can we polish rusty hearts?" He answered that hearts are polished "through frequent remembering of death and reading of the Holy Qur'an."

Men who do not use their God-given cognitive faculties can only be called worse than cattle, inasmuch as animals follow only their instincts and natural urges and are not conscious of either the possibility or the necessity of higher knowledge or moral choice. Animals do see physical objects, but they lack the capacity to perceive them meaningfully as items of articulated and theory-loaded knowledge. If a human being similarly fails to attain the metaphysical knowledge of the Really Real — despite possessing all the faculties to do so — then he is not just like animals, he is worse than them.

> ... they have hearts with which they fail to grasp the truth, and eyes with which they fail to see, and ears with which they fail to hear. They are like cattle; nay, they are farther astray. (Al-Aa'raf 7:179)

Though these people apparently have all the faculties of reason and perception, yet they have so deadened them that those faculties do not work in the real sense; as a result they remain misguided throughout their lives and go headlong into Hell.

The External Prompter of Good and Evil

As explained above from the Qur'anic point of view, the inner denizen of man's self is an arena of ceaseless struggle between good and evil tendencies. It is this deep-seated moral fact that constitutes the eternal challenge for man and renders his life an unceasing moral struggle. Man is squarely charged with his efforts to overcome evil because he is unique in the order of creation, and has been endowed with the highest faculties of intellect and intuition in order to fulfill his mission as God's vicegerent on earth.

In addition to the inner impulses mentioned above, man also encounters some external agents and prompters, both on the side of good and of evil. However, the truth that must be appreciated deeply here is that, ultimately, the decisive role in this respect is played by man's own inner preference and choice. That is to say, the real nucleus of initiation and volition is the subjective-self itself. External forces can only partly instigate and encourage either in the direction of virtue and moral probity or in the direction of sin and immorality. Even *Iblees* (or Satan), the greatest instigator of evil, has no power to force a man to perform an evil deed. Although Satan waylays man from all sides, his machinations fail against really virtuous persons. To be sure, no man is immune from the Devil's temptations — not even the prophets — yet it is within the reach of any man of true faith and will to resist and overcome these enticements. Thus the Qur'an states:

> Verily, you shall have no power over My servants — unless it be such as are (already) lost in grievous error and follow you of their own will. (Al-Hijr 15:42)

> Behold, he (Satan, the accursed) has no power over those who attained to faith and who put their trust in their Lord. (Al-Nahl 16:99)

These and some other verses of the Holy Qur'an clearly assert that Satan cannot force men to commit sin, and will address his erstwhile followers on the Day of Judgement.

This disunion shows that the real evil emanates from man's own complex of desires, for Satan makes it clear that it is only by means of suggestions and insinuations *(wasawis)* that he was able to reach the sinner's self; and had it not been for an already-existing evil disposition due to lust, anger, superstition or fanciful ideas, these temptations would have had no effect whatsoever. This, in effect, means that Satan never forces, nor can force, anyone to do evil but he only tries to entice or allure his potential victim. His enticement consists in presenting the immediate and superficial gains or pleasures of this worldly life, so that many people fall victim to these temptations, most of them temporarily but many permanently. The latter are termed by the Holy Qur'an the "friends" or the "party" of the Devil. Thus, *Iblees* is far more cunning and artful than strong, more sly and contriving than forthrightly challenging.

Similarly, on the other side, no preacher or instigator of faith and virtue — not even Prophet Muhammad (SAW) — could ever convert any person to the right path. And, surely, we cannot possibly imagine a better and more sincere preacher than our beloved Holy Prophet (SAW). Therefore, we read in the Qur'an:

> (O Prophet!) you cannot give guidance to whom you please, but it is Allah who guides whomever He wills; and He is fully aware of all those who would let themselves be guided. (Al-Qassas 28:56)

According to several authentic traditions, the above verse relates to the Prophet's inability to induce his dying uncle Abu Talib — whom he loved dearly and who had loved and protected his nephew from the leaders of Quraysh — to renounce the pagan beliefs of his ancestors and to profess faith in God's unity. The Qur'anic statement "you cannot give guidance to whom you please" has undoubtedly a timeless import as well; it stresses the inadequacy and

inability of all human endeavours to "convert" any other person, however loving and loved, to one's own beliefs, or to prevent him from falling into what one regards as error and sin, unless that person wills to be so guided.

With regard to external tempters and motivators of evil, we all know that they are the friends and progeny of *Iblees*, from amongst both men and jinns. The Qur'an explicitly states:

> Indeed, he (Satan) and his tribe (ilk) see you from where you cannot see them. (Al-Aaraf 7:27)

A tradition of the Holy Prophet (SAW), reported by Imam Bukhari (RA), also tells us that Satan so vigorously influences a man that he, as it were, penetrates his entire inner being just like blood that circulates in the whole body. In contrast with the all too common knowledge of external agents and motivators of evil, however, what is generally less appreciated is the truth that angels help and provide strength, tenacity and moral firmness to the true believers in this worldly life. Just like the hordes of Satan who, through their beguiling activity, tempt a man towards evil, the pure and holy angels provide inner peace and perseverance to believers in following the straight path of Islam and in the arduous task of establishing the sovereignty of Allah (SWT), i.e., in establishing the socio-political order of Islam. Both Almighty Allah (SWT) and His angels bless and give glad tidings to them, as is borne out by the following verses:

> And remember when your Lord commanded the angels: I am with you; so give firmness unto those who have attained to faith (with these words from Me) I shall cast terror into the hearts of those who are bent on denying the truth….." (Al-Anfal 8:12)

> (But) behold, as for those who say, "Our Sustainer is Allah" and then stand firm, upon them angels descend (saying): "Fear not and grieve not, but receive the good news of that Paradise which has been promised to you. We are your companions in the life of this world and (will be so) in the life to come. (Haa Meem Al-Sajda 41:30, 31)

Peremptory Factor or Argument for Islam *(Itmam-e-Hujjat)*

Now, we can easily discuss and expound the last point of the first portion of the subject under discussion. We have observed that although the basic internal motivators of evil and good are already given to man in the form of *latifa-e-nafs* and *latifa-e-ruh,* the really decisive grounds for moral and virtuous conduct are the cognitive faculties of the *nafs,* the inherent moral sense, and the power of spiritual apprehension. On the other hand, with regard to the external and objective impelling factors for evil and good, there are respectively the Devil (including all Satanic agents) and the angels (including all the angelic forces). But here again the decisive and peremptory role is played by Divine revelations, God's messengers, and His revealed Books. Together, they constitute a peremptory argument from Almighty Allah (SWT) for man's accountability, and leave for him no ground for excuse or ignorance on the Day of Judgement. The affirmation of all these doctrines is known as the belief in Prophethood *(Iman bil-Risalat).* We read in the Qur'an:

(We sent all) Prophets as heralds of glad tidings and as warners, so that men might have no excuse before God after the coming of these Prophets; and God is indeed Almighty, Wise. (Al-Nisa 4:65)

O People of the Book! Now (after a long time during which no messenger has come) there has come unto you (this) messenger of ours to make the truth clear to you, lest you say, "No bearer of glad tidings has come unto us,nor any warner," for now there has come unto you a bearer of glad tidings and a warner. And Allah has the power to will anything. (Al-Ma'ida 5:19)

From these two Qur'anic verses it becomes clear that the real purpose and objective of the advent of God's messengers (or envoys) has been to establish conclusively and finally man's responsibility to act as God's vicegerent on earth and to follow His guidance in this life, and to leave no scope for excuses on the Day of Judgement. All excuses offered by man for his misdemeanor will be lame and of no avail.

The truth may be recalled here once again that just as the external motivators and instigators of good and evil have no real power or authority over a human being — they only motivate and inspire or tempt and seduce — the institution of Prophethood also works only as an agent of advice and exhortation. That is the reason why at most places in the Qur'an the function of prophets and messengers of God has been described as "heralds of glad tidings" and "warners" (Cf. e.g., Al-Kahf 18:56). And the oft-used expression employed for revelation and the Holy Book are *zikr*, *zikra*, and *tazkira*, all derivatives of the root z-k-r, meaning to recall or to remind (a forgotten truth). The following six quotations from the Holy Qur'an bear this out:

Behold! It is We who have revealed this Reminder, and, behold! It is We who shall truly guard it (from all corruption). (Al-Hijr 15:9)

Ta Ha;We did not send down the Qur'an to you to make you unhappy (or unsuccessful), but only as an Exhortation to all who stand in awe of God. (Ta Ha 20:1-3)

Nay, verily, these (revealed messages) are but a reminder (Abas 80:11)

Thus offering an Insight and a Reminder unto every human being who willingly turns unto God (Qaf 50:8)

In this, indeed, there is a Reminder for anyone who has a (wide-awake) heart, or who gives ear and listens with attention (i.e., who listens with a conscious mind). (Qaf 50:37)

And so, (O Prophet) exhort them; your task is only to exhort, you cannot compel them (to believe). (Al-Ghashia 88:21,22)

Tazakkur and its derivatives are very significant Qur'anic terms which mean recalling to mind the fundamental truths intuitively recognized and apprehended by the primordial human nature *(fitrah).* In essence, *tazakkur* pertains to the first stage in the comprehension of Divine realities and meanings. It also alludes to the fact that the Qur'anic teachings are not extraneous or alien to human nature. They actually reflect the experiences of man's true inner self and are

meant to awaken reminiscences of something already apprehended but forgotten, rather than to import something altogether new. God, in His infinite mercy, has sent His messengers and Books in order to reinvigorate the innate ethical perception of mankind and to facilitate moral choice and motivation.

The Holy Qur'an appeals to all thoughtful persons and men of discernment and comprehension to think and ponder over the outer universe of matter as well as the inner realm of the spirit, as both are replete with the unmistakable signs of the Almighty Creator. Along with these, it invites them to deliberate over the Divinely inspired verses or *ayaat* (literally meaning the "signs of God", because they too turn man's mind to the Almighty). In effect, this means that with the aid of the Qur'an, full and intense awareness of the Absolute Reality springs up to man's consciousness, just as a forgotten piece of memory rises up from the depths of the psyche to the surface of conscious awareness.

The upshot of the ideas expressed in the above lines is that, through the advent of prophets and revelation of Books, an external witness for or against man has been established by Almighty God. On the Day of Judgement, prophets and messengers — who were sent to guide various communities or nations — will be brought forth as prosecution witnesses against their own people.

> (O Muhammad, warn them of) the Day when We shall raise up a witness from among every community to testify against it, and We shall call you to testify against these people.... (Al-Nahl 16:89)

> We have sent unto you a messenger to be a witness over you, just as We had sent a messenger to the Pharaoh. (Al-Muzzammil 73:15)

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is told by the Almighty that he is only a "warner" or a "reminder", and therefore "your task is only to preach", and "you are not a warden over them." The vocation of Prophethood, according to the Qur'an, is bearing witness to the Truth before men, in this world as well as in the world-to-come. The following Qur'anic verse substantiates it fully:

> He has chosen you..……so that the Messenger may be a witness (to Truth) before you and you might bear witness (to it) before all mankind. (Al-Hajj 22:78)

To sum up, the real mission and purpose of Prophethood is that, through preaching, admonition, advice, greeting and warning, God's chosen messengers may establish a peremptory *hujjah* (or argument) for man's accountability. The cover term for the entire prophetic activities is called *Shahada ala Al-Naas,* i.e., bearing witness to the Truth before mankind. And that was, therefore, the foremost and the primary purpose of the advent of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), who is addressed thus in the Qur'an:

> O Prophet, We have sent you as a witness, a bearer of good news and a warner, and as one who summons (all men) to God by His leave, and as a luminous lamp. (Al-Ahzab 33:45,46)

This means that, like all other prophets and messengers of God, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was also a preacher, a moral and spiritual mentor, a teacher, a warner, a bearer of glad tidings and a witness of Truth. Even though each prophet of Almighty Allah (SWT) had his own mark of distinction with regard to one or the other of these numerous aspects of the prophetic call, the truth of the matter is that the loftiest and most distinguished position among all the prophets is occupied by Prophet Muhammad (SAW). However, with regard to his position as the last and the final messenger of Almighty Allah (SWT), the splendour and magnificence of the prophetic mission of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is particularly distinct and unique, as will be made clear in the following section.

Characteristics of plenitude and completion in Muhammad's Prophethood (SAW)

The most distinctive characteristic of the mission of the Holy Prophet (SAW) has been brought out by the Qur'an at three places thus:

> He it is Who has sent forth His messenger with the Guidance (Al-Huda) and the True way of life (*Deen al-Haq*), to the end that he make it prevail over all aspects of living...
> (Al-Tawba 9:33; Al-Fath 48:28; & Al-Saff 61:9)

The important point of which notice should be taken here is that with respect to Prophet Muhammad (SAW), these words have been repeated at three places in the Qur'an without the slightest change or difference of construction, whereas these have not been revealed even once for any other prophet or messenger.

The famous scholar and mystic of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent — Shah Waliyullah Dehlvi (1703-1762) — has made this Qur'anic verse the subject of in-depth and extensive study in his book *Izalatul Khafa un Khilafatul Khulafa*. He has described it as the most important verse in understanding the purpose and mission of Muhammad's Prophethood (SAW). Similarly, Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi (1872-1944) has taken this verse as the key for understanding the global revolutionary manifesto of Islam.

A careful study of the verse reveals that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) has been sent by Almighty God along with two items: (1) Al-Huda or The Guidance, and (2) Deen al-Haq or the True Way of Life (sometimes translated as "the religion of truth"). Let us study these expressions more closely one by one:

Al-Huda

We would not be wrong to take the word in its wider literal sense, but if we are to try and understand the term Al-Huda in the light of numerous Qur'anic precedents, then it can only signify the Holy Qur'an itself. This is because only this very Divine Book is *"hudal lil-muttaqeen"* (guidance for the God-fearing; Al-Baqarahh 2:2), as well as *hudal lin-naas* (guidance for the ordinary run of people; Al-Baqarahh 2:185). The meaning of Al-Huda is thus elucidated in the following verses:

We have caused this (message) to be a light, whereby We guide whom We will of Our servants. (Al-Shura 42:52)

Verily, this Qur'an guides to the path that is most right. (Al-Isra 17:9)

(O Prophet) Say: It has been revealed to me that a group of jinn listened,then(returning to their folks) they said, "we have indeedd heard a wonderful Qur'an, which guides to the right way..." (Al-Jinn 72:1,2)

This point is further reaffirmed if we study the following verse where the purpose of sending messengers has been described in these words:

We sent Our messengers with clear instructions and bright signs and sent with them (Our revealed) Book and the Balance... (Al-Hadeed 57:25)

It is quite obvious that in this verse just as the word *Al-Meezan* has been substituted for *"Deen al-Haq"*, similarly, *Al-Kitab* has been used in place of the expression Al-Huda used in the verse under discussion. This proves the truth without an iota of doubt that in the context of Muhammad's Prophethood (SAW), Al-Huda signifies nothing else but Al-Qur'an.

Deen al-Haq

Whether we take the complex locution as a relational compound and translate it as *"Deen of Truth"*, or take it as a qualificative compound and translate it as *"True Deen"* (as has been done by the majority of the translators of the Holy Qur'an), its connotation and meaning remain essentially unchanged. *Deen Al-Haq* means *Deen of Allah*, because the true faith and the true way of life can be none else but that which comes from Almighty Allah (SWT). Similarly, the personification of *"Haq"* can be none other than Allah Himself, as the Qur'an says:

This is because Allah is the Truth. (Al-Hajj 22:6)

On that Day (of Judgement) Allah will pay them in full their just due, and they will come to know that Allah alone is the Ultimate Truth, manifest and manifesting. (Al-Nur 24:25)

This clearly shows that *Deen al-Haq* is, in real import and meaning, equivalent to *"Deen of Allah."*

If we concentrate on the word *Deen,* we come to know that in Arabic language it connotes exactly what it means in Surah Al-Fatiha, viz., recompense, which is, of course, rewards of the Paradise in case of good deeds and torments of Hell-fire in case of bad ones. That explains the fact why in the early surahs of the Makkan period the word *Deen* is used in its core meaning of recompense; for instance:

Have you seen him who belies the rewards and punishments of the Hereafter? (Al-Ma'un 107:1)

Therefore (O Prophet!)who can belie you after this concerning the rewards and punishments of the Hereafter? (Al-Teen 95:7)

Nay, but they deny the rewards and punsihments of the Hereafter. (Al-Infitar 82:9)

In addition to Surah Al-Fatiha, the word *Deen* alongwith *yaum* has appeared at twelve other places in the Qur'an and it signifies the Day of Judgement and Final Reckoning.

Again, as recompense (both in the form of reward and punishment) necessarily implies a law or code of conduct and its observance, the connotation of the word *Deen* also extended from its literal root meaning to a full-fledged Qur'anic term and initially meant obedience and servitude. Consequently, we read twice the expression *mukhlis sal lahud-din*, once the expression *mukhlis lahu- deeni,* and six times *mukhlis seena lahud-din.* And at all these places, it invariably means total, unconditional and exclusive obedience and submission to Almighty God. An element of intensity and emphasis is added to it through the additional use of *haneefan* or *hunafa.* The word *Deen*, however, finally assumed the full richness of meaning and implied a whole system of obedience and servitude. The pivotal position in this system of life is assigned to the person or being who is taken to be the supreme ruler and with reference to whom the detailed practical commands are laid down. This meaning of *Deen* is amply borne out by the following Qur'anic words:

Thus We supported Yousuf with Our plan; for under the king's law, he would not have been (otherwise) able to detain his brother. (Yousuf 12:76)

In the kingdom prevalent at that time in Egypt, the king was the absolute sovereign and everybody submitted to his will. The Qur'an speaks of this socio-political system as *deen al-malik*. Exactly in this sense, it also speaks of *Deen Allah* — the *Deen* of Almihgty Allah (SWT) — in the following verse:

When God's succour comes and victory (is attained), and you see people entering the *Deen* of God in large groups. (Al-Nasr 110:1,2)

This means that when Prophet Muhammad (SAW), after more than two decades of strenuous struggle, succeeded in establishing in the Arabian peninsula the system of life in which Allah (SWT) was accepted as the Supreme and Absolute Sovereign and people entered into this faith in great numbers, it was referred to by the Holy Qur'an as *Deen Allah.* From this perspective, it would not be inapproopriate to call the modern political set-up of Democracy (in which, at least theoretically, the people of a country are themselves the sovereign) as *Deen Al-Jamhoor*.

However, the Holy Qur'an also employs expressions in which Deen is attributed to somebody other than God, and this should be described as a metaphorical usage of the possessive adjective, e.g., *deeni* (my *Deen*) , *dinukum* (your *Deen*), or *dinuhum* (their *Deen*). This is obviously in the sense of the system or way of life; which one has accepted and adopted. This system of life and socio-political governance, so to say, is a person's *Deen*. In this very sense, Islam is sometimes called *Deen* of Muhammad; e.g., in one of the popular prayers we supplicate thus: "O Lord, succour all those who support and promote the *Deen* of Muhammad."

Of course, Islam is actually *Deen* of Allah, but it is also Muhammad's *Deen* as it was revealed upon and given to mankind through Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

To sum up, *Deen Allah* is that system of belief and action which is based on the basic premise of total, absolute and unconditional submission to the commands of Almighty Allah (SWT). And this, in fact, is the *Al-Meezan* – the Balance – which is the final and ultimate form of Divine guidance for mankind. After progressing gradually through the vicissitudes of history, Divine guidance finally culminated in the most comprehensive and balanced system of life as revealed to Prophet Muhammad (SAW). The Islamic way of life represents the ideal system of social justice and equity wherein the duties and rights of all are clearly laid down, "in order that the humanity may stick to, and behave with, Justice."*(Al-Hadeed 57:25)*

The Wisdom in the Timing of the Last Prophet's Advent

A deeper consideration will reveal the truth that the point and wisdom in the temporal location of the culmination of Prophethood and imparting perfection to the revealed system of life can also be appreciated with reference to these two expressions viz., *Al-Huda* and *Deen al-Haq*. Indeed, the time of the advent of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was the period of human history in which humanity moved from infancy to mental maturity in two respects.

First, just before the appearance of Islam and its revealed Book, man had reached rational maturity and had conceived and spelled out all types of philosophies he could think of solely on the basis of his reason. The late Professor Yousuf Salim Chishty (d. 1984), a great scholar of religion, philosophy, theology and mysticism, was of the opinion that twelve hundred years, i.e., from 600 B.C to 600 C.E., is the span of history in which human thought and intellect progressed from infancy to maturity. All major world religions as well as all of the influential philosophical shcools appeared during this very period. Though, in later centuries, physical sciences have progressed tremendously and the range of man's general information has expanded immensely, no essentially new idea has been expressed in the realm of metaphysical thought and philosophy, and neither a new religion nor new thought-system or philosophical school has appeared during that period. Ideas and thoughts expressed in pompous phraseology in modern times are, in fact, nothing more than echoes of older philosophies. Indeed, even though they are wrongly presented as novel thoughts or fresh ideas of the most original variety, they are, in reality, like old wine in new bottles.

Now, if all this is true — and there is no ground whatsoever to challenge this thesis — it becomes quite understandable that 7th century C.E was the most appropriate time for the revelation of the last Divine Guidance in the form of Al-Qur'an for the whole mankind and for all times to come. The protection of its text is guaranteed by Almighty Allah (SWT) Himself, so that it could serve as a permanent source of guidance in thought and action. That is the reason why the Qur'an asserts the following very explicitly:

> Say: If the whole of mankind and jinns were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed each other with help and support. (Al-Isra 17:88)

And, time and again, it offered the whole mankind a challenge in these words:

> And if you are in doubt as to what We have revealed to Our servant, then produce a surah like thereunto. (Al-Baqarah 2:23)

It is a pity that so far Qur'anic scholars have mainly focused on the literary and stylistic beauties of the Holy Book and its linguistic and rhymic excellences. Whatever scant attention was paid to the meaning-content of the Book was too, by and large, misguided and misconceived in so far as either Aristotelian logic or half-baked scientific theories were made paradigm of truth in the light of which attempts were made to understand the Qur'an. Little did they realize that the Qur'an could not possibly accept these ever-changing strait-jackets. The truth should be clearly borne in mind that the Holy Qur'an is essentially *Al-Huda* and its real magnificence lies in its guidance for thought and practical life; and that it was given to man at a time when his independent thought, as such, had reached its zenith and he had, so to say, attained mental adulthood and maturity.

The second point of wisdom in the timing of the last Prophet's advent seems to be the fact that the social consciousness of mankind had also reached maturity in the 7th century C.E., in that human polity had experienced all the major evolutionary stages. After passing through the social polities of tribal organization and city state, human life had entered the phase of great kingdoms and empires. This, in fact, meant that the hold and domination of socio-political system on human life had reached its full intensity for the first time, and that man had begun to face the vexed and multi-dimensional problems of human society and collective life. Moreover, the time was about to usher in which humanity had to encounter such unsolvable issues — as those of the Individual versus Group, Man versus Woman, Capital versus Labour — and in the solution of which human thought moved from one extreme to another, always adding to human travail and misery.

Therefore it was quite in the fitness of things that, at this satage of human history, Almighty Allah (SWT) bestowed upon man the most balanced system of social justice and equity that was really "*Al-Meezan*" and offered the best and the most excellent solutions for all the intricate issues and problems of social existence. In all spheres of collective life — social, economic, and political — the God-given system of life guided humanity to the straight path and the most balanced middle way, putting an end to social perversions or discrimination, economic exploitation and political repression. And thus the sole purpose of sending prophets and revelation of Books — which was to guide the people to live with equity and justice — was fully realized in the advent of the Last Prophet and a concrete example was set for all times to come through the completion of the true faith, as the Qur'an says:

> This day I have perfected your *Deen* for you, completed My favour upon you and have chosen for you Islam as your Deen. (Al-Mai'dah 5:3)

Le-yuzhira-hu

Now, let us take another step forward and try to understand the meaning of the Arabic expression *le-yuzhira-hu* used in the Qur'anic verse under discussion. The literal meaning and

connotation of the verb *izhar* — to make dominant — is accepted by all scholars and experts of Qur'anic sciences. However, there are more than one opinion in respect of the subject and object of the verb *izhar*, though these differences of opinion cause no real change in the essential meaning of the verse.

According to some scholars, the subject of the verb *izhar* is the same Being Who is also the subject of the verb *irsal* — to send — i.e., Almighty Allah; in this case the translation would read: "He it is Who has sent forth His messenger ... to the end that He, i.e., Almighty Allah, make it prevail over all aspects of living..." Some others maintain that the implicit subjective pronoun in the expression le-yuzhira-hu refers to Prophet Muhammad (SAW), in which case the translation would read: "He it is who sent forth His messenger ... to the end that he, i.e., the Holy Prophet, make it prevail over all aspects of living.." Both interpreters have taken recourse to finer subtleties of Arabic grammar in support of their respective positions, but the question that clinches the matter is this: What real difference does either position make in the over-all purported intent of the verse? As Muslims, we all believe that the final and real agent for all actions is none other than Almighty Allah (SWT). Despite this basic metaphysical belief, all imperatives in the Qur'an are directed and addressed to human beings living in the world of facts, and it is incumbent upon them to leave no stone unturned in performing their religious obligations. That is why we see that the Holy Prophet (SAW) struggled very hard all through his prophetic career for making Islam triumphant and dominant. That is to say, in the world of objective facts, the Prophet had to carry out an extremely arduous struggle for Islam at a purely human level, although we believe that the ultimate and real causal agent of all actions is always Almighty Allah (SWT). The Qur'an categorically asserts thus:

> So the fact is that (O Believers) you did not slay them but Allah slew them, and (O Prophet)you did not throw (the sand) but Allah threw it. (Al-Anfal 8:17)

Would those who are, through minor difference of interpretation based on feeble arguments, trying to distort the whole concept of religious obligations think about the far-reaching implications of their standpoint! The truth of the matter is that, on the basis of a trivial point, they have wrongly absolved themselves of the Qur'anic obligation of making Islam dominant as a politico-socio-economic order in the world. They should try to honestly consider as what would have happened if the Holy Prophet and his Companions had taken the above quoted verse in its apparent literal sense. Obviously, they would have forthwith given up their struggle for the cause of Islam and the subsequent world history would have been radically different from what it is. Moreover, would it be possible for anyone of us to have embraced Islam, the true Divine faith?

Indeed, we should always try to be on guard against the seductive trappings of Satan, in particular his master deception that causes us to see as superfluous, burdensome, or frightening that which is really one of the basic obligations of all faithful. Is not the attitude of complacency exhibited by these misguided interpreters of the Holy Qur'an identical with one depicted in the proverb "A bad workman quarrels with his tools"?

The whole matter is quite clear to anyone who endeavours to think with an unbiased mind. Surahs Al-Tawba, Al-Fath, and Al-Saff — the three surahs which contain the verse under

discussion — are all concerned mainly with the subjects of *Jihad* (or struggle and effort) and *Qitaal* (or armed conflict) in the cause of Almighty Allah (SWT). In particular, Surah Al-Saff is entirely, from the beginning to the end, on the theme of struggle and war in the way of Allah. And in this, immediately after the verse under discussion, a clarion call has been made in an extrememly motivating manner for Muslims to girdle up their loins for the cause of Islam. First, the question is put to believers whether they wanted themselves to be saved from grievous suffering. And then it is said in clear and unambiguous terms that this can only be achieved by undertaking the hard and arduous tasks of struggle and armed strife in the way of Almighty Allah (SWT). The verses in full read:

> O Believers ! Shall I point out to you a bargain that will save you from grievous suffering? That you believe in Allah and His Prophet, and that you strive (your utmost) in the cause of Allah with your property and your lives; that will be best for you if you but knew. (Al-Saff 61:10,11)

It is truly a wonderful bargain; what we are asked to give is so little, what we are promised in return is so much — only if we knew the eternal truth, and understood the comparative value of things — the sacrifice of our fleeting pleasures and gains for Divine mercy and forgiveness, His love, and eternal bliss. In reward of struggle and war in the cause of Islam we get Almighty Allah's unbounded bounty and munificence. Later in this surah, Almighty Allah (SWT) assures the believers of victory in this world too. On top of it all, the believers who endeavour for Islam with zeal and zest are regarded as helpers of Allah (SWT) and the Prophet (SAW). If a man does not enter into this bargain, he will not even rid himself of grievous suffering, let alone seek loftier spiritual rewads and blessings.

This, in effect, means that the whole issue is quite simple and understandable. Islam is *Deen* of Almighty Allah (SWT) and to make it prevail in this world is essentially the duty of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Now, the acid test for the sincerity of a person who claims belief in both of them — in Almighty Allah (SWT) and Prophet Muhammad (SAW) — is whether or not he strives his utmost in the cause of Islam with all his energies, capabilities, wealth, and life. If he thus "helps" Allah and His Messenger, he will attain eternal success and bliss. Otherwise, he will face condemnation and torments of Hell-fire in the life to come. This is stated very clearly in verse 25 of Surah Al-Hadeed, part of which has already been quoted above. The translation of the full verse is as follows:

> We sent Our messengers with clear instructions and bright signs and sent with them (Our revealed) Book and the Balance in order that the humanity may stick to, and behave with, Justice. And We sent down iron which has great strength and other benefits for men. This has been done so that Allah may know who helps Him and His messengers, unseen. Sureley, Allah is Strong, Almighty. (Al-Hadeed 57:25)

Similarly, Surah Al-Saff ends with this call:

> O Believers, be helpers (in the cause) of God, even as Jesus, the son of Mary, said to his disciples, "who will be my helpers (in the cause) of God?" (Al-Saff 61:14)

If one does not accept this immaculately clear view of the Islamic obligation (regarding the struggle to establish the *Deen* of Allah) based on self-explanatory propositions, he will do so at his own peril.

It may be mentioned here that there is a difference of opinion about the referent of objective pronoun *"hu"* in the expression *"le-yuzhira-hu"*. According to some interpreters and exegetists of the Qur'an, it refers to Prophet Muhammad (SAW), and,according to some others, it refers to *Deen Al-Haq*. Again, this makes no real difference in the meaning and import; the victory of the Prophet is not to be taken as his personal or his clan's or tribe's victory. Rather, it means the dominance and triumph of the Faith which he preached tirelessly, and established, in letter and spirit, throughout the whole of the Arabian peninsula.

Alad-deeni Kulli-hi

This expression of the Qur'anic verse has been variously translated as "over all false religions" and "over all *Deen*." It is quite significant that the plural form of the noun *Deen* — which is *Adiyyan* — has not appeared in the whole of Qur'an even once. Moreover, the emphasis connoted by the expression *kulli-hi*, in addition to the verse already noted, appears at only one other place in the Holy Qur'an, as follows:

> And fight against them until there is no more *fitnah* and all *Deen* belongs to Allah alone. (Al-Anfal 8:39)

Here, to translate *Deen* in the plural as *Adiyyan* will be quite wrong; to say that all religions can belong to God is an utter travesty of truth, whereas directing and devoting all sincere worship and obedience to One Almighty is an important Qur'anic theme which has been expressed repeatedly in nearly identical words. With this significance of the locution *Deen* in mind the real import of the verse under discussion becomes very obvious; that is, the purpose of the advent of the Last Prophet (SAW) is that he should make the *Deen* of Allah dominant over the whole way of life and with regard to all collective institutions. One can therefore translate this part of the verse as "…..to the end that he make it prevail over the entire *Deen*, i.e., over all aspects of living...."

It is important at this juncture to understand logically and rationally as to why establishing *Deen* or making it dominant was at all essential. This was for two reasons:

First, *Deen* by its very nature demands its establishment and domination over all the spheres and institutions of life. A way of life — particularly one based on total submission to God Almighty — is meaningless and contradictory if it is not implemented and put in practice. This by itself makes *Deen* quite radically different from a mere religion in the contemporary Western sense of the word.

A religion is, in fact, a fragmentary or a partial affair and can exist under any *Deen*, which is identifiable with the dominant politico-socio-economic order of a given land. At the time when Islam was dominant as a *Deen*, we find that Christianity, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism and Buddhism survived under its domination as religions, and their followers were

forced to accept the Qur'anic injunction "... they agree to pay the exemption tax *(jizia),* and remain humbled." (Al-Tawba 9:29). Similarly, reduced and attenuated to the status of a private affair, Islam existed during the Colonial era as a mere religion.

Deen, on the other hand, is a total and integrated whole, and it has no reality or efficacy until it is practised *in toto* and held supreme over all spheres of life, including that of the political authority itself. As a matter of common sense, two different *Deens* — that is to say, two different politico-socio-economic systems — can never co-exist; thus, the co-existence of Monarchy and Democracy or Capitalism and Communism on a par with each other in the same country is just not possible. However, their co-existence is conceivable only in case one of them maintains its authority as the dominant system of the country, while the other yields and allows itself to be reduced to the level of a ritualistic and non-assertive religion.

In respect of the difference between religion and *Deen*, two points should be clearly borne in mind: (1) the Arabic word for religion is *madhhab*, which has not been used at all in the Qur'an, nor has it been used in the whole corpus of *Hadith* in its present commonly understood meaning. It came to be used much later quite rightly to connote various schools of juristic thinking, e.g., *Hanbali madhab, Maleki madhab, Hanafi madhab,* etc, which are in reality branches or developmental variants of that part of the faith of Islam that deals with law or *Shari'ah*. (2) Though, in matters of details, the revealed law or the *Shari'ah* given to Prophet Musa (AS) and Prophet Muhammad (SAW) shows numerous points of divergence, yet the essentials of *Deen* have remained identical right from Prophet Adam (AS) down to Prophet Muhammad (SAW). This point is elucidated by the following Qur'anic verse:

> The same *Deen* has been ordained for you as that which He enjoined on Noah, the one which We have sent by inspiration to you (O Prophet), and that which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: namely, that they should establish this *Deen* and make no divinsion therein. (Al-Shura 42:13)

The second reason why the establishing of the *Deen* of Allah is so vital is this: irrespective of its excellence and instrinsic worth, a given system of life will never rise above the level of a fantacy or a daydream unless it is established in the world of reality so that everyone can see its merits, instead of just hearing and reading about them. For Prophet Muhammad (SAW), the actual establishment of Islam's dominance over all social structures and institutions was essential to prove its viability and practicability; otherwise even this matchless and most outstanding system of life would have been taken as a mere utopia. And surely, utopias never convince people at large. The Prophet's duty of furnishing a "Witness to the Truth" for people and leaving them no excuse of ignorance would have remained undischarged until the whole politico-socio-economic system of Islam — including its law or *Shari'ah* — were translated into concrete facts. That is why the Holy Prophet (SAW) and his Companions (RAA) endeavoured to their fullest in their strenuous struggle to achieve the domination of Islam, which blossomed and flourished during the period of the Rightly Guided Caliphs. In this golden era of pristine Islam, the ideal moral values preached so far only in sermons — values like human freedom, fraternity and equality — were turned into real and objective facts, and this feat has been authentically recorded in history and acknowledged by world historians.

H. G. Wells, the eminent British author and historian who otherwise shows disrepect and insolence towards the personal life of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), acknowledges in his *A Concise History of the World* that although high-sounding and idealistic sermons were frequently delivered in favour of values like human freedom, fraternity and equality, no attempt was ever made to put them in practice; the moving sermons of Jesus of Nazareth being a case in point. According to Mr. Wells, it was Prophet Muhammad (SAW) who, for the first time in human history, established an actual social order based on these high moral values. Thus, we see that even an enemy of Islam is forced to acknowledge the marvelous superiority of the prophetic career of our Holy Prophet (SAW), not only in the capacity of a preacher and a sermonizer but also as the architect *par excellence* of the Islamic polity.

It was this success of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and his devoted Companions (RAA) — in establishing Islam as a *Deen* — which proved the fact that all the higher abstract values can indeed be put into practice. In the family system, it was shown how women can have a status of high respect and dignity and enjoy their rights even though an administrative authority was given to the husband. In the political setup, it was proved that the individual's complete freedom of speech and criticism can co-exist side by side with strict political regimentation and discipline, as well as with all the demands of justice. On top of this, it was shown that, in the economic sphere, private ownership and personal initiataive are perfectly compatible with smooth circulaltion and equitable distribution of wealth. Without accomplishing all this in practice, a conclusive proof would not have been established in favour of the Islamic way of life for the men of the age that began with the advent of Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

Just think of any good or social value, and you will find it realized supremely and in the most balanaced form in the system of life established by the Holy Prophet fourteen centuries ago. Indeed, one feels that in the realm of social justice and equity, human thought and endeavour has throughout only tried to reach near or approximate to the lofty ideals set by the Prophet's revolutionary struggle, and in no sense surpass them. That is the reason why in the present century, during the freedom struggle for India, the Hindu leader Mr. Gandhi asked his co-nationals to keep before themselves the models of the governance of Abu Bakr and Umar (and not those of Ramayana and Maha Bharata, or Bikrama Jeet and Chandra Gupt Moria). Gandhi expressed these thoughts in his own magazine *Harijan* in 1937 at the time when ministries were formed for the first time in British India, and since Muslim League had boycotted the 1936 elections, the Congress had formed ministerial cabinets throughout the Indian subcontinent.

The completion of Divine guidance and finality of Muhammad's Prophethood logically necessitated that he, in addition to variegated missionary and soul-purifying and character-building activities, organize a revolutionary party of highly committed and dedicated men, and that, after defeating all forces of evil, actually establish and operationalize the *Deen* of Allah in its totality. This constitutes the summatory character of Prophet Muhammad's mission which assigns to him a unique and privileged status in the galaxy of Divine messengers.

The Leader of Revolution

We will no doubt be guilty of irreverence if we consider Prophet Muhammad (SAW) comparable to other leaders of historical revolutions in the world. But, nevertheless, it is a fact that no one in the entire human history deserves the title of "leader of revolution" more than Prophet Muhammad (SAW). This is because all revolutions witnessed by mankind — including the French and the Bolshevik Revolutions — were partial and imperfect, as they affected only some part of the collective human existence. Thus, the French Revolution brought change in the political structure and the form of government, while the Bolshevik Revolution mainly changed the economic setup of Russia. On the other hand, the Islamic Revolution of the 7th century C.E was a total and absolute transformation which affected all aspects of life. Everything changed. Right from the basic metaphysical beliefs to the ethical value-structure, from the eating and drinking habits to the dynamics of interpersonal relations, from the rites and rituals for worship to ceremonies and customs, and from the social setup and economic system to the political order and statecraft — all underwent radical changes. Indeed, this was a Revolution in the true sense of the word.

The Revolutionary Struggle

The endeavor and struggle of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) to bring about the Islamic revolution too was unique and unparalleled in the entire human histoy, in so far as all the variegated stages of the revolutionary process were completed in one man's life span. There is no other instance in world history in which a propounder of a revolutionary ideology — starting from theoretical dissemination and going through all the phases of organization, passive resistance, challenge, and armed conflict [For thirteen years in Makkah, the Prophet (SAW) called people onto Allah, conveyed the Divine message to the Arabes and endued physical as well as mental tortures. His companions were put to torture. At Medinah, when a good number of beleivers embraced Islam, he checked the trade route of Quraish and other tribes in order to provoke them. He fought decisive battles with Makkan (battle of Badr, Uhad, Khandaq near Medinah and the battle of Makkah and Honain near Makkah)] — successfully brought about a revolution. This, in fact, is the most remarkable feat of our beloved Prophet (SAW) that, starting the mission of making Islam dominant from his individual self, he established the "Kingdom of Heaven on earth" within a brief span of twenty three years (of lunar calender) so that Islam was practiced in its totality, both in letter and in spirit, throughout the length and breadth of the Arabian peninsula.

Now, we would like to discuss two important points which link up with ideas presented in the above lines. The first point is about the short-sightedness and errorneous judgement of Western shcolars vis-à-vis the revolutionary struggle of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), while the other relates to the ummatic obligation of Muslims with regard to completing the mission of the Holy Prophet.

The Misconception of Western Writers

The Western "scholars" of Islam and the orientalists who have published a number of books on the life-history of the Holy Prophet (SAW), have generally erred in their over-all assessment of the Prophetic mission.

The main reason for their misunderstanding is that they did not at all appreciate the culminatoy and summatory character of his prophetic mission. They do have a vague notion of the basic and primary objectives of the prophetic call, and hence they feel that a prophet may at best be a preacher, a mentor, a teacher, a reformer and a warner. But as they are not clear about the finality of Prophethood and the summatory character of Prophet Muhammad's mission, they cannot possibly imagine a prophet as a statesman, a commander of fighting armies, and an administrator. They just cannot swallow the fact that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) performed all the above mentioned functions, that he was both a preacher and a statesman. Finding it difficult to reconcile mentally all the capacities of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), some openly repudiated his Divine messenger-ship and only acclaim him to be a great leader. Others had recourse to very naive and foolish theses.

Thus, in the words of Dr. Michael Hart, "he [Prophet Muhammad] was the only man in history who was suprememly successful on both the religious and secular levels." Arnold Toynbee maintains that "Muhammad failed as a prophet and succeeded as a statesman." Montgomery Watt speaks of the Prophet as "one of the greatest sons of Adam", but, unable to harmonize the "secular" with the "religious", he has, very wrongly, divided the life of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) into two disparate and disjointed phases, hence the titles of his two books are *"Muhammad At Makkah"* and *"Muhammad At Medinah."* The insinuation here is that the personality of the Prophet at Makkah was entirely different from his personality at Medinah. All this, in fact, is the result of a fundamental misconception regarding Prophet Muhammad's Divinely ordained mission as the last of all prophets.

The Ummatic Obligation of Muslims

The vital question that a true Muslim must ask himself is this: Did Prophet Muhammad (SAW) himself fulfill the prophetic mission assigned to him by Allah (SWT) completely and in all respects? Or has that mission to be continued and carried out by Muslims to its completion at the global level? If we concede the truth projected in the latter question, can we really accomplish this gigantic task merely by celebrating annually the prophet's birthday with devotion and fervor and by eulogizing his life and character traits? The right answer to this is definitely in the negative.

We Muslims must understand very clearly the all-important corollary of the belief in the Finality of Prophethood with the advent of Muhammad (SAW). That the institution of Prophethood has reached its zenith means that there will be no more prophets, and, therefore, the responsiblity for the task executed by the chain of prophets has now been placed on to the shoulders of the Muslim Ummah. In respect of both types of duties — those pertaining to the

basic purpose of Prophethood, which is preaching, and those related to the consummatory nature of Muhammad's Prophethood, which is establishing the *Deen* of Allah in its totality — the responibility lies with those who take pride in belonging to the Muslim Ummah and who adore and eulogize the Holy Prophet.

All convinced and committed Muslims must realize that, since after Prophet Muhammad (SAW) there is going to be no prophet for the guidance of mankind, Prophet Muhammad's mission has therefore acquired the following two-fold direction and significance. Firstly, he is the Messenger of Almighty Allah (SWT) to his contemporary Arab people (in particular) and, secondly, he is also the Messenger to the entire humanity till the end of the world (in general). It is stated quite clearly in the Holy Qur'an (Al-Jum'ah 62:2,3) that the Prophet (SAW) was sent unto both the unlettered people *(ummiyeen)* and unto all the people belonging to other lands and future times *(akhereen).* The latter aspect of Muhammad's Prophethood stresses the universality and timeless validity of all that was revealed to him. In a sermon already referred to, the Holy Prophet (SAW) addressed his audience thus:

> Verily, I am God's Messenger unto you people in particular and unto all mankind (of other lands and of future times) in general. (Cf. Sermons of the Holy Prophet, reproduced in *Nahjul Balaghah*)

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) executed and fully achieved the target envisaged by the more immediate or "particularized" aspect of the prophetic call in his own life time, through the myriad activities of preaching and disseminating the Truth as well as persistent active struggle and even armed conflicts, in making Islam the supreme and dominant force in all of the Arabian peninsula. In this struggle, the Holy Prophet (SAW) and his Companions (RAA) had to put up with all sorts of opposition, verbal and physical persecution, slander and mental anguish, conspiracies and armed attacks, vilifications and disinformation campaigns. Prominent landmarks in this arduous struggle include the confinement in the Sheb of Bani Hashim, the extremly insulting treatment and physical assault in Ta'if, the ordeal of hiding in the cave of Thaur while the Prophet and his Comanion Abu Bakr were chased by the Quraysh, the migration to Medinah, and the battles of Badr and Uhad and Khyber and Tabuk; the Holy Prophet (SAW) was forced to see hundreds of his devoted and cherished Companions martyred in this struggle, including Mus'ab Ibn Umair and Hamza (May God be pleased with them). But without faltering a bit, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and his Companions (RAA) endured all the hardships and tribulations with patience and persevarence, and continued to work persistently for the exection of the Divinely ordained mission, until Islam gained ascendancy in all walks of life and the Qur'anic values and laws were implemented at all levels.

The climax and finale of the prophetic mission came at the pilgrimage performed by Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in 9 AH, when he addressed a mammoth gathering of Muslims at the *Hajj* Congregation and asked them whether he had fully transmitted to them the Truth. In reply, all testified that he had indeed communicated the Truth, that he had conscientiously discharged the duty entrusted to him by Almighty Allah (SWT), and that he had worked for their spiritual well being in the best possible manner. Only a few months later the Holy Prophet (SAW) left this world for the Heavenly abode. Now, in the light of the following Qur'anic verse:

He has chosen you.... so that the Messenger may be a witness (to Truth) before you and you might bear witness (to it) before all mankind. (Al-Hajj 22:78)

the execution of the prophetic mission at the global level is the obligation of the Muslim Ummah as a whole. In the pursuance of this very objective the noblest of the Prophet's Companions, i.e., the four Rightly Guided Caliphs, carried the banner of Islam on his behalf to the wide world outside the Arabian Peninsula. Indeed, Islam reigned supreme in its pristine excellence on a vast area of the then civilized world, and the obligations of witnessing to the Truth before mankind, preaching the message of Almighty Allah (SWT) and making Islam dominant as a system of life were discharged with utmost dedication for almost three decades. Thereafter, the *Deen* of Allah experienced a slow and gradual decline till it reached its lowest ebb in the first quarter of the present century.

Starting as an ideology believed in by a handful of people, Islam became the rock-bottom foundation of a whole world civilization. Now it has been reverted back to a position in which very few Muslims genuinely and whole-heartedly adhere to its dictates. We have, however, seen that Almighty Allah (SWT) demands of us a struggle and persistent endeavour to re-establish the link between faith and power, bringing both of them into a single unified whole.

So let us passionataely involve ourselves in our society to do His will, and still more passionately let our hearts yearn for His pleasure. Let the life of the Prophet energize our ambitions and priorities. Let his message be our message, let his conduct be our conduct, and let his goals be our goals. Let nothing motivate us but an intense longing to please our Lord in the world to come, and let this expectation and desire give a dicisive impetus to our life in this world.

The hope of meaningful future must make us bold enough to confront the risks and endure the pains that lie in living by God's will. We, as Muslims, have but one option: to strive to change the world to conform to the model given to mankind by Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Any other choice will only betray our hypocrisy.